

What is Claimed is:

1. A control panel comprising:

one or more device selection buttons; and

5 one or more controls that are programmable in accordance with selection of a first
of said one or more device selection buttons.

2. The control panel of Claim 1, wherein said one or more controls are content
selection buttons having a display that varies in accordance with selection of said first

10 device selection button.

3. The control panel of Claim 2, wherein said first device selection button is
programmable in accordance with a first show definition, said first device selection
button having a first device association and first display format with said first show

15 definition and a second device association and second display format with a second show
definition.

4. The control panel of Claim 1, wherein said device is associated with one of:
stored video data, stored audio data, stored audio-video data, stored camera position

20 presets, and stored image data.

5. The control panel of Claim 2, wherein said display of said one or more content
selection buttons includes a filename.

6. The control panel of Claim 1, wherein said one or more controls includes at least one of: a joystick, a knob, a forward button control, and a reverse button control.

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7. The control panel of Claim 6, further comprising:
a display panel that displays a current state of controls in accordance with selection of a first of said one or more device selection buttons.

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8. The control panel of Claim 2, further comprising:
one or more source selection buttons that are programmable in accordance with a first show definition, each of said one or more source selection buttons including a content identifier displayed describing content associated with said each source, said one or more source selection buttons having first source associations and first display formats in accordance with a first show definition and second source associations and second display formats in accordance with a second show definition.

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9. The control panel of Claim 1, further comprising:

one or more video overlay buttons having a display that varies in accordance with a selected input source, each of said one or more video overlay buttons including a content identifier reflective of a content of said selected input source.

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10. The control panel of Claim 1, wherein said control panel is implemented using at least one of hardware and software.

5 11. The control panel of Claim 10, wherein all buttons of said control panel are one of: displayed on a graphical user interface, and keys included on a hardware unit.

12. The control panel of Claim 1, comprising:

10 a first memory including instructions for processing received messages;

 a first component that executes instructions from said first memory;

 a second memory including instructions for periodically refreshing a display of at least one of said buttons and updating said at least one of said buttons in response to a received message; and

15 a second component that executes instructions from said second memory.

13. The control panel of Claim 12, wherein said first and second memories are the same memory and said first and second components are a same processor.

14. A method of controlling a show comprising:

sending messages between a control panel and a computer system over a primary communication connection to control one or more devices;

monitoring said primary communication connection to determine if said computer
5 system is unavailable for communicating with said control panel; and

in response to determining that said computer system is unavailable, using a backup communication connection to control said one or more devices during said show.

15. The method of Claim 14, wherein said monitoring is performed by said
10 control panel.

16. The method of Claim 14, wherein said primary communication connection is independent from said backup connection.

15 17. The method of Claim 14, wherein said computer system controls at least one of said one or more devices by communicating with a router to which said computer system and said at least one device is connected.

18. The method of Claim 14, wherein at least one of said one or more devices is
20 directly connected to said computer system.

19. The method of Claim 17, wherein said control panel is connected to said router using said backup communication connection.

20. The method of Claim 14, further comprising:

sending a message from said control panel to said computer system in response to a selection on said control panel.

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21. The method of Claim 20, further comprising, in response to receiving said message:

updating state information about said control panel; and

updating system status of a show.

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22. The method of Claim 21, wherein said state information includes at least one of: information local to said control panel, and information affecting a state of multiple control panels.

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23. The method of Claim 20, wherein said multiple control panels include at least one hard control panel and at least one soft control panel having identical functionality.

24. The method of Claim 14, wherein said sending and said monitoring are performed during a show, and, prior to said sending and said monitoring, a configuration

20 of at least one programmable button on said control panel is defined.

25. The method of Claim 24, further comprising:

updating a display associated with said at least one programmable button in response to selection of another button of said control panel.

5 26. The method of Claim 25, wherein updating said display includes displaying a filename of content associated with said at least one programmable button.

 27. The method of Claim 14, wherein a transition is made of on-air content from a first source to a second source using an effect indicated on a transition effect button,
10 said transition effect button including a display that varies in accordance with a current selection of one of a plurality a selected effect buttons.

28. A system used in broadcasting comprising:

at least one input source;

at least one output source; and

a control panel that controls operation of said at least one input source and said at

5 least one output source, wherein said control panel includes at least one programmable control having content that is dynamically updated in response to selection of another control.

29. The system of Claim 28, wherein said at least one programmable control is a

10 button having a display that is updated in response to selection of another control.

30. The system of Claim 28, wherein said at least one input source is a previously stored data file.

15 31. The system of Claim 28, further comprising:

a router connected to at least one of: an input source and an output source, said router having a backup connection to said control panel; and

a computer system connected to said control panel and said router, wherein said control panel and said computer system have a primary connection used for controlling

20 operation of said at least one input source and said at least one output source, and

wherein said control panel uses said backup connection to control said input and said output sources upon determination by said control panel that said control panel is unable to communicate with said computer system to control said input and said output sources.

32. A computer program product for controlling a show comprising code that:
sends messages between a control panel and a computer system over a primary
communication connection to control one or more devices;
monitors said primary communication connection to determine if said computer
5 system is unavailable for communicating with said control panel; and
in response to determining that said computer system is unavailable, uses a
backup communication connection to control said one or more devices during said show.

33. The computer program product of Claim 32, wherein said code that monitors
10 is included in said control panel.

34. The computer program product of Claim 32, wherein said primary
communication connection is independent from said backup connection.

15 35. The computer program product of Claim 32, wherein said computer system
controls at least one of said one or more devices by communicating with a router to
which said computer system and said at least one device is connected.

36. The computer program product of Claim 32, wherein at least one of said one
20 or more devices is directly connected to said computer system.

37. The computer program product of Claim 35, wherein said control panel is
connected to said router using said backup communication connection.

38. The computer program product of Claim 32, further comprising:
code that sends a message from said control panel to said computer system in
response to a selection on said control panel.

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39. The computer program product of Claim 38, further comprising, code that, in
response to receiving said message:

updates state information about said control panel; and
updates system status of a show.

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40. The computer program product of Claim 39, wherein said state information
includes at least one of: information local to said control panel, and information affecting
a state of multiple control panels.

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41. The computer program product of Claim 38, wherein said multiple control
panels include at least one hard control panel and at least one soft control panel having
identical functionality.

42. The computer program product of Claim 32, further comprising code that
defines a configuration of at least one programmable button on said control panel, and
wherein said code that defines is executed prior to said code that sends and monitors, said
code that sends and monitors being executed during a show.

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43. The computer program product of Claim 42, further comprising:

code that updates a display associated with said at least one programmable button in response to selection of another button of said control panel.

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44. The computer program product of Claim 43, further comprising code that updates said display by displaying a filename of content associated with said at least one programmable button.

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45. The computer program product of Claim 32, wherein a transition is made of on-air content from a first source to a second source using an effect indicated on a transition effect button, said transition effect button including a display that varies in accordance with a current selection of one of a plurality a selected effect buttons.